Review

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The Great Musicians. Edited by Francis Hueffer.

Sebastian Bach. By Reginald Lane Poole, M.A.

English Church Composers. By Wm. Alex. Barrett, Mus. Bac. Oxon.

[Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington.]

MR. POOLE, in his life of Bach, modestly expresses a hope that it may be the means of preparing a worthy reception for the English translation of Dr. Spitta's elaborate and exhaustive work, which is shortly to appear. We may certainly credit him with having achieved this object; but there is much to be said in praise of the book on its own merits. True it is that his facts are chiefly derived from the "Johann Sebastian Bach" of Spitta already mentioned; but there is something in arranging these facts so as to engage the reader's attention, and in creating an interest by placing the composer vividly before us, instead of baldly cataloguing the several events of his life. The author is evidently an earnest student of Bach's works, and loves to linger over the career of one he so reverences. Those, therefore, who sympathetically peruse the pages of Mr. Poole's book cannot fail to derive both pleasure and profit from their contents; and we sincerely hope that the work will receive as extensive an appreciation as it deserves. Mr. Barrett is a recognised authority on the subject which he ably treats in the second of the two books before us. His remarks upon the characteristics of our national composers for the Church, show an intimate knowledge of their works; and much valuable information may be gained from his treatise, which has evidently been a labour of love with the author. We are glad to find that, amongst the volumes devoted to the lives of the "Great Musicians," one at least contains such a glorious list of English names as to convince the most sceptical that we can boast of a few eminent national composers.

The Musical Directory, Annual and Almanack for 1883. [Rudall, Carte and Co.]

THE late appearance of this Directory is accounted for by the occurrence of a fire on the premises of the printer of the work; and we trust, therefore, that this will not prove detrimental to the sale of a publication which has now been issued for thirty-one years. In every respect it is fully equal to its numerous predecessors; and indeed we may say that unusual care seems to have been used in collecting the addresses of members of the musical profession, for the status of whom—as we find that allusion has been made to the subject in a lecture by Mr. Monk—it is but fair to say that the Editor is by no means responsible.

Organ Music. By P. Wolfmum.

First Sonata, in B flat minor, Op. 1.

Second Sonata, in E, Op. 10.

Third Sonata, in F minor, Op. 14.

[Munich: Jos. Aibl; Novello, Ewer & Co.]

THESE Sonatas, speaking in a general way, show all the characteristics of the German style of composition. According to English ideas they are inclined to be heavy, and some would say dry; but the music is thoughtful, dignified, well suited to the instrument, and they would be considered fine voluntaries by many a cathedral organist. The choral forms a large and effective feature in several of the movements, while the two fugues (last movements of Sonatas 1 and 2) are both worthy of the attention of all earnest organ students.

What an Angel heard. Ballad.

The Thread of the Story. Ballad.

Words and Music by Louisa Gray.

[Duff and Stewart.]

THE composer of these songs writes well enough to render herself independent of authors who "supply" words for musical setting; and, although the poetry of the first ballad is somewhat conventional, the lines are full of human feeling, and the music, without much pretence to originality, is unforced and melodious. "The Thread of the Story" is a better song in every respect; the little tale upon which it is founded being well expressed both in words and notes. We may say, too, that in both these compositions the harmonies are always appropriate, and the accompaniments written with care and judgment.

Classical Compositions for the Organ. Nos. 1 & 2. By J. Wodehouse. [Weekes and Co.]

THE pieces included in the above-named numbers are arrangements consisting of "Angels ever bright and fair," Handel—"My heart ever faithful," Bach—"I waited for the Lord," Mendelssohn—"How beautiful are the feet," Handel. All these pieces have been very well arranged for the organ before, but we suppose there is no reason why they should not be done again. In the present instance they have been carefully adapted to organs of moderate pretensions, and are excellently printed.

Two Lovers. A Four-part Song. Poetry by George Eliot. Composed by Edward Hecht.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE exquisitely delicate treatment of this Part-song by the composer will demand equally delicate treatment from the vocalists; but where this can be ensured, there can be little doubt of the composition winning the sympathies of an audience. The changes from tonic minor to major give much effect to the varied feeling of the words; the concluding phrase of the song, especially, reflecting most faithfully the natural pathos of the climax. Mr. Hecht will enrich the art, as well as do honour to himself, by multiplying such specimens of healthy part-music.

March of the Heralds (and a movement from the Overture). From Professor Glover's Cantata, "St. Patrick at Tara." Arranged for the Organ by Seymour Kelly.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THIS is a composition of a very ordinary kind. In listening to the first theme, we are strongly reminded of a Gavotte or Bourrée by a well-known composer. We suppose the Professor is not responsible for the rather startling fifths in the first bar of this March. In our opinion they are of the worst kind, and we only trust that this work is not intended for use as a Church voluntary.

FOREIGN NOTES.

WE record on another page the death of Richard Wagner, which occurred on the 13th ult., at Venice, where he had been spending the winter months. The remains of the great tone-poet left Venice on the 17th ult. for Bayreuth, a large concourse of persons assembling in gondolas on the Grand Canal, to take their last farewell of the mortal remains of one who had shed such lustre upon the musical art. The coffin was placed in a black gondola, which was ornamented with four lions' heads. Wax tapers were burning in front, and a number of wreaths, including those forwarded by King Louis of Bavaria and King Humbert of Italy, besides floral offerings from societies, clubs, and private friends, almost filled the gondola. At the railway station a train, draped in black, was waiting to convey the body and the mourners to Vicenza, and thence by a special train they travelled direct to Bayreuth. During the journey whenever the train halted it was met by representatives of local musical societies, as well as by deputations from neighbouring towns, who presented laurel wreaths and other tokens expressive of their sense of the loss which musical art has sustained in the man to whose memory they were offered. Most of the intended special demonstrations had, however, to be dispensed with, in deference to the wish of the bereaved widow of the master, who accompanied the remains. On Sunday afternoon, the 19th ult., the funeral ceremonies took place at Bayreuth, in the presence of numerous deputations from all parts of Germany and Austria, and a multitude of people such as the small town of Bayreuth has probably never before witnessed. Speeches were made by the burgomaster of the town, as well as by Herr Feustel, in the name of the committee of management of the "Festspiele." The ceremonies produced a deep impression upon all present. Accompanied by the sounds of the noble funeral dirge known as "Siegfried's Tod," from the composer's "Götterdämmerung," and the singing of choral societies, the procession moved through the streets of Bayreuth—the silence of the spectators most eloquently expressing their heart-felt grief—to